



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

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# Inspection of Cadarn Housing Group: a Summary Report

## **Cadarn Housing Group**

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## Cadarn Housing Group

1. Cadarn Housing Group (the Group) comprises Cadarn Housing Group Ltd and Newydd Housing Association (1974) Ltd.
2. The Group had 70 staff providing its housing services from two regional offices – the Vale office in Barry and the Valleys office in Rhydyfelin, Pontypridd – and an area office in Newtown, Powys. Its head office was in Tongwynlais.
3. The Group had 2,353 homes located mainly in the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Tâf, Powys and Neath Port Talbot, with a small number of homes in Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Cardiff, Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil, Torfaen and Swansea.

## The inspection

4. The Assembly Government has commissioned the Wales Audit Office, an independent agency, to carry out a programme of inspections of all of the larger housing associations in Wales. The inspection of the Group took place in October 2006 and focussed on the landlord services provided by Newydd Housing Association and on related support services provided by Cadarn Housing Group.
5. In carrying out the inspection, inspectors worked to the Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales (the Regulatory Code). This is explained in more detail in the full inspection report.
6. The inspection asked two questions:
  - Does the Group deliver good-quality services?
  - Does the Group secure continuous improvement in services?
7. To answer the first question, the inspection looked at eight areas of the Group's work. These eight areas are listed in the table below, along with a summary of the inspection findings and the inspectors' ratings of how well the Group was doing in October 2006.
8. 'Satisfactory' services are what inspectors would expect to find; 'good' or 'excellent' services exceed those expectations. If services did not meet expectations, they were found to have 'scope for considerable improvement' or to 'fail to comply with the Regulatory Code'.
9. To answer the second question, the inspection looked at the way the Group forms its strategies and at its arrangements for ensuring that it continues to improve services to residents. The most effective organisations are found to 'demonstrate strong corporate and strategic capabilities' and those doing least well are judged to 'fail to demonstrate capability'.
10. Due to the lapse of time between the inspection and the expected publication date for the inspection report, at the request of the Group, the Wales Audit Office carried out a follow up review of three service areas – relationship to residents, managing housing and maintaining housing – in December 2008.

## The findings

### Does the Group deliver good-quality services?

11. The October 2006 inspection found that the Group was providing 'good' services in one service area and 'satisfactory' services in four service areas. Three services had 'scope for considerable improvement'.

Service area	Findings	Judgement
Relationship to residents	The Group was putting in place new arrangements to improve its approach to involving residents.	Scope for considerable improvement
	The Group needed to improve the quality and range of information it provided to residents.	
	Tenants were often asked for their views but those views were not always used to improve services.	
	Some service standards were in place, but tenants had not been involved in putting these together and nothing was being done to find out or tell tenants whether these standards were being met. Complaints were not being dealt with well.	
Equal opportunities	The Group needed to do more to promote respect for equality and diversity, and to make sure it was delivering services fairly.	Satisfactory
	The Group treated Welsh and English equally.	
Providing housing	The Group worked with local authorities to provide housing to meet local housing needs and was involved in community regeneration projects.	Good
Rents service	Only limited advice and support was available to tenants to help them manage if they got into debt.	Satisfactory
	The Group's arrangements for managing and recovering rent arrears worked well but its approach to service charges was not working well.	
Letting housing	The Group had not involved tenants in setting its lettings standards and did not make sure that all properties let met those standards.	Satisfactory
	Potential tenants were aware of and had good access to the Group's housing.	
	The Group was working well with local authorities on the allocation of its homes and made sure that its allocation system operated fairly.	
Housing management	Tenants were given the most secure form of tenancy available.	Scope for considerable improvement
	The Group did not deal well with anti-social behaviour.	

Service area	Findings	Judgement
Maintenance service	Day-to-day repairs were not managed well.	Scope for considerable improvement
	Gas servicing was not being managed well.	
	The Group needed to improve its approach to ensuring that it met the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.	
People with support needs	The provision of support to people with support needs was not being managed well.	Satisfactory
	The Group didn't have all the information it needed to make sure it could deliver services in a way that would meet tenants' differing needs.	

12. Our follow-up review in December 2008 looked at the three services where we had judged that there had been 'scope for considerable improvement', to find out whether those services had improved since October 2006. We found that:
- There had been significant improvements in the Group's arrangements for its relationship with residents.
  - Whilst there was little evidence of improvement in the quality of service to residents, the Group had invested in the development of its managing housing service, building a solid foundation for the service to improve in the future.
  - Gas servicing and access to the repairs service had improved, but there were still problems with the out-of-hours repairs service. The Group did not have the information it needed to make sure that a quality service was always being provided, and still was not making sure it was getting value for money and good quality in its repairs work.

### **Does the Group secure continuous improvement in services?**

13. The Group's approach to continuous improvement was 'raising standards in service delivery':
- there were clear working arrangements between the members of the Group;
  - the Group had a clear strategy for the future, but needed to improve its plans to achieve this strategy;
  - the Group needed to give more thought to the quality of services to residents when considering its performance; and
  - the Group needed to improve the way it reviewed the quality of its services and to put in place better arrangements to ensure that services improved in the future.

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## Good practice

14. Inspectors found some good practice within the organisation:
- The Group provided a range of practical and useful guidance to staff through its intranet to ensure that it was able to provide a high quality of service in Welsh.
  - The Group was providing homes without grant to Torfaen County Borough Council, as interim or temporary accommodation for homeless families.
  - The Group was the first in Wales to work with a joint housing register for choice-based lettings – Homes4U in the Vale of Glamorgan. This scheme had been in place for about three years and gave more choice to applicants.

## What happens next?

15. Within eight weeks of the full report being published, the Group should circulate this summary of the report to tenants.
16. The Group should produce a Commentary and an Action Plan to show what it will do to address any issues the inspectors have identified.
17. The lead inspector will agree the Action Plan with the Group. This will then be available on the Wales Audit Office's website.
18. The Assembly Government's Regulation Co-ordinator will monitor work on the Action Plan. When inspectors and the Assembly Government are satisfied that the Action Plan has been completed, they will sign it off.

This document is a summary. The full report is available from the address on the back page of this document.





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